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Twelve Indicted on Charges in Drug Conspiracy

- Drugs, Weapons Seized by Joint Task Force -

WASHINGTON - Twelve people have been indicted in connection with an ongoing investigation by the FBI/Metropolitan Police Department Safe Streets Task Force into a drug ring operating in the Washington, D.C. metropolitan area. The federal indictments were announced today by U.S. Attorney Ronald C. Machen Jr., Shawn Henry, Assistant Director in Charge of the FBI's Washington Field Office, and Metropolitan Police Department Chief of Police Cathy L. Lanier.

During the course of the year-long investigation, agents have seized three guns, more than \$20,000 in cash, approximately 575 grams of crack cocaine, more than 130 grams of powder cocaine, over 950 grams of heroin, and more than 10 pounds of marijuana.

Ten defendants were arrested today, one was already in custody, and a twelfth is being sought. Those arrested, pursuant to an indictment that was unsealed today in U.S. District Court for the District of Columbia, include: Gerald Kenneth Powell, 39; Terrell Abbott, 23; Gerard Anthony Bush, 41; Arthur Elliott III, 38; Jarrell Elliott, 30; James Cornell Harrington, 39; Luc Hounache, 51; Tamara McGuire, 33, John William Twyman, 39, and Larry Wiggins, 31. Claude Brooks, 59, also named in the indictment, already was being detained on another matter.

McGuire, who is charged as member of the drug conspiracy, is a Metropolitan Police Department Officer and has been on administrative leave.

The investigation that led to the indictment and today's arrests began in July 2009 and focused on the trafficking of heroin and crack cocaine in the area near 19th Street and Bennett Place NE, Washington, D.C. The indictment includes charges covering the period of July 2009 through August 2010.

The defendants are charged with conspiring to distribute and possess with the intent to distribute 280 grams or more of crack cocaine and 100 grams or more of heroin. Brooks, Taylor, Elliott and Abbott are

also charged with additional counts of unlawful distribution of narcotics related to sales of crack cocaine and heroin to undercover police officers.

Most of the defendants made their initial appearances on the charges this afternoon in the U.S. District Court for the District of Columbia. If convicted of the conspiracy charge, they face sentences from ten years to life in prison.

“Crack cocaine and heroin devastate our neighborhoods and destroy families,” said U.S. Attorney Machen. “Today we fought back by dismantling a major drug ring, but our work is not done. We will continue to work closely with the FBI, Metropolitan Police Department, other law enforcement partners, and the community to put drug traffickers out of business.”

“Today's arrests demonstrate the aggressive attack being waged on drug trafficking and criminal enterprises operating in the cross-border region,” said Assistant Director Henry. “These arrests will reduce the supply of heroin and cocaine available to violent street crews operating in the Washington, D.C. Metropolitan area, and will help to make our community a safer place to live.”

“We remain committed to targeting these types of drug organizations,” said Police Chief Lanier. “When we learned that an MPD officer was associated with this case, we were disappointed, but not dissuaded. Our message to anyone involved in these organizations is that these kinds of crimes will not be tolerated in our city.”

The Safe Streets initiative is funded in part by the Baltimore Washington High Intensity Drug Trafficking Area as well as the Organized Crime Drug Enforcement Task Force. The Safe Streets Initiative involves more than 150 Safe Streets Task Forces around the country that combat street gangs by combining federal, state and local police resources. The task forces, which began in 1992 in Los Angeles and the District of Columbia, address gang activity including drug-related crimes.

This case was handled by a component of Safe Streets that focuses on criminal activity along the District/Prince George's County border. The FBI initiated the Cross Border Task Force in June of 2009, bringing together Washington D.C. and Prince George's County, Md. federal, state, and local assets to focus on criminal enterprises working back and forth across the border region. The Task Force partners working on this investigation include personnel from the FBI's Baltimore and Washington Field Offices, Prince George's County Police Department, the Metropolitan Police Department, and the Bureau of Alcohol Tobacco and Firearms.

An indictment is merely a formal charge that a defendant has committed a violation of criminal laws and every defendant is presumed innocent until, and unless, proven guilty.

In announcing today's arrests, U.S. Attorney Machen, Assistant Director Henry, and Chief Lanier commended the actions of the Special Agents from the FBI's Washington Field Office, as well as MPD Detective Joseph Sopata and other MPD members of the Safe Streets task force. They also commended the support provided by U.S. Attorney's Office employees John Russell, Jr., Regan Gibson, Diane

Brashears, Supervisory Paralegal Mary Downing, and Criminal Intelligence Analyst Frank Morgan. Finally, they cited the efforts of Assistant U.S. Attorney Erin Andrews who investigated the case, and Assistant U.S. Attorneys Darlene Soltys and Courtney Spivey, who investigated and will prosecute the case.

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